

Corporate Assessment Report

September 2008



# Corporate Assessment

Borough of Telford and Wrekin

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## Introduction

- 1 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is the means by which the Audit Commission fulfils its statutory duty under section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003 to make an assessment, and report on the performance, of local authorities. Corporate assessment is one element in the overall assessment that leads to a CPA score and category.
- 2 The purpose of the corporate assessment is to assess how well the Council engages with and leads its communities, delivers community priorities in partnership with others, and ensures continuous improvement across the range of Council activities. It seeks to answer three headline questions which are underpinned by five specific themes.

What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

- Ambition
- Prioritisation

What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

- Capacity
- Performance management

What has been achieved?

- Achievement

Considered against the shared priorities of:

- sustainable communities and transport;
- safer and stronger communities;
- healthier communities;
- older people; and
- children and young people.

- 3 Corporate assessments are normally aligned with a joint area review of services for children and young people (JAR). In practice this means that the Council's achievements in relation to children and young people are assessed using the evidence provided from the JAR. In addition, examples of outcomes and activity, which are relevant to the other themes and which are identified through the JAR, are considered within the corporate assessment.

- 4 The JAR covers specific services for children and young people that are directly managed or commissioned by the Council, as well as relevant health and youth justice services provided by other bodies. It focuses on the contributions made by services to improving outcomes especially concerning safeguarding; services for looked after children; and services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The separate JAR report also covers the leadership and management of services for children and young people and, in particular, the way that such services work together to improve outcomes. The description and judgement in respect of children and young people in this report is summarised from the JAR report and the most recently published Annual Performance Assessment from Ofsted which covers all of the Council's children services.

## Executive summary

- 5 The Council is performing strongly. Effective leadership, responsive systems and strong partnership working are delivering good outcomes for local people. The Council and its partners have developed clear and challenging ambitions to transform the borough so that residents can enjoy better quality of life. This long term strategic vision is underpinned by a set of inter-connecting short and medium term strategies.
- 6 Partnership working is well established and effective. There is a genuine sense of shared ownership of the vision for the borough, characterised by the strap line 'Team Telford', and this is based on a clear understanding of how the local challenges and opportunities fit into the wider regional and national context. Delivery is supported by a robust strategic framework and excellent working relationships.
- 7 Priorities are firmly based on a sound understanding of the needs and views of local people, derived from close consultation with, and detailed data about, local communities. Priorities are designed to make the most of local and regional opportunities and translate into action through outcome based targets. Sound service and financial planning translate the priorities into actions for council services, and robust performance management ensures that delivery remains on track.
- 8 The Council is a strong community leader, working astutely with others in the public, private and voluntary sectors. It champions the needs of Telford and Wrekin to maximise benefits for the local area, and to promote improvement in the wider area. This is making a real difference to the borough, and enhancing the prospects for growth and prosperity in the sub-region.
- 9 Political and managerial leadership are strong and effective. The Leader and Chief Executive are well regarded throughout the Council, ambitions and organisational values are well communicated internally and externally and a 'can do' culture amongst staff maximises their ability to deliver against the Council's ambitions. Good workforce planning underpins the effective deployment of staff, and excellent partnership working, especially with the local PCT, further enhances capacity. The Council has been slow to improve ICT and Customer Access but clear plans are now in place to upgrade customer access with agreed capital and revenue in place. The Council provides good value for money, driven by a commitment to reduce the financial burden on local taxpayers.
- 10 The Council has a good track record of effective performance management, with an appetite for performance improvement that is shared with partners. The well established systems to monitor and manage performance are rigorous and the Council and its partners have continued to work to improve them.
- 11 Working with its partners, the Council has made tangible improvements to the quality of life in Telford and Wrekin in the last three years. Achievements reflect the focus on social and physical regeneration, especially in the borough's most deprived communities.

- 12 The Council has spearheaded the drive to transform the borough through social and physical regeneration. It has worked closely with partners to create the conditions whereby the borough can resolve some of the long standing socio-economic problems that were built into the original design of Telford New Town. In doing so, it has already attracted additional high quality inward investment to the Borough, significantly improved the local skills base, and made a strong start to improving the quality of life in housing estates in the most deprived areas. The creation of a local urban regeneration company, Transforming Telford, has drawn in over £15 million from Advantage West Midlands on the back of pooled land assets with English Partnerships and the impact of that is already beginning to be felt, for example in tackling poorer housing conditions in the private sector. The Council is actively shaping sustainable communities by ensuring that the ambitious local building programme learns from past mistakes, with the first phases of three new communities already characterised by high quality design, community focus, accessibility and a strong commitment to sound environmental practice. The local environment has also improved through increased recycling, enhanced access to, and satisfaction with local public transport, and the provision of improved open spaces and cycle paths.
- 13 A strong multi-agency approach has significantly reduced crime and anti-social behaviour. Crime levels overall are below average, and the local crime reduction partnership is the most improved in the country. All major crime rates have fallen since 2003/04, some of them, such as burglary, dramatically. Engagement with minority communities is building cohesion, as is work with partners on hate crime. People feel increasingly safe in the borough.
- 14 The strategic approach to health taken by the Council and its partners has achieved improved outcomes in the health of local people, but challenges remain. Rates of cancer and coronary heart disease have reduced and are now much closer to those for England as a whole. The gap on life expectancy has also closed. The Council and its partners have taken a creative and integrated approach to healthier lifestyles, learning and community cohesion which has won national support from sporting governing bodies. However, problems with alcohol abuse and teenage pregnancy remain.
- 15 The Council and its partners take a strategic approach to meeting the needs of older people, and the carers who support them. A clear focus on encouraging and maintaining independence is achieving outcomes for frail or otherwise vulnerable elderly people. There is a wide range of initiatives across service areas aimed at older people, and close policy engagement with, and valued support for, the local Senior Citizen's Forum. These programmes take increasing account of the needs of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community and other groups at risk of disadvantage.

- 16 Outcomes for children are good and generally improving. Most health outcomes are in line with similar authorities and all referrals to specialist mental health services are seen within expected timescales. Educational achievements are in line with similar authorities. Looked after children live in stable placements and a high number receive timely health assessments. Young people have good opportunities to contribute their views and these influence changes in service delivery. Fewer children, and adults, are being killed or injured on the borough's roads.
- 17 The Council's overall approach to equality and diversity is good, but sometimes lacks both coherence and impact. It clearly understands the range of factors that impact on equality of outcomes for local people, and takes this into account in its approach to service design, delivery and management. There are clear structures and mechanisms in place for managing and implementing activity in support of equality and diversity, and robust plans for monitoring impact and driving further improvement. And the Council's commitment to achieving a workforce that is reflective of the local population has been reflected in the recent increase in the proportion of staff with disabilities. However, the growing network of delivery to diverse groups within the community requires stronger strategic focus. Impact is often unclear and; despite the recent changes in the composition of the workforce, the proportion of BME staff remains low.
- 18 The Council delivers good value for money. There is a robust and well established system for delivering this, with a full participation by councillors that adds real value.

## Areas for improvement

- 19** Despite some real and effective improvements in the delivery of the Council's equality and diversity strategies, there is still more that can be done to strengthen performance in this area through a stronger and more sustained strategic focus. It is not clear that the individual measures to address the needs of the minority communities provides full coverage, or delivers a consistent impact. Measures need to be taken to try and ensure that the workforce is more representative of the community in respect of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population, as has happened recently with disabled people. The growing range of equality and diversity measures need to be given a more strategic focus, using data from the Equality Impact Assessment process now underway. And the existing pattern of engagement with groups that represent minority groups, such as Telford Race, Equality and Diversity Partnership and Connecting Communities, which they have already recognised they need to look at afresh to make sure that they are still fit for purpose in the light of shifting demographics locally, and to ensure that the roll out of the six-stranded approach to equality and diversity does not diminish the impact of work with the BME community.
- 20** The underlying strengths of the performance management system need to be fully capitalised upon. More focused challenge from councillors on performance, either through Cabinet or through Scrutiny, is needed. The internal review processes, especially those relating to key performance indicators, need to be sharpened, and opened up to partners. And managers at all levels need to better understand, monitor and manage the sub-components of performance improvement, to ensure that local PIs and sub-targets actually make a tangible difference.

## Summary of assessment scores

Headline questions	Theme	Score*
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	Ambition	4
	Prioritisation	4
What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	Capacity	3
	Performance management	3
What has been achieved?	Achievement	3
<b>Overall corporate assessment score**</b>		<b>4</b>
<b>*Key to scores</b>		
1 – below minimum requirements – <b>inadequate performance</b>		
2 – at only minimum requirements – <b>adequate performance</b>		
3 – consistently above minimum requirements – <b>performing well</b>		
4 – well above minimum requirements – <b>performing strongly</b>		

### \*\*Rules for determining the overall corporate assessment score

Scores on five themes	Overall corporate assessment score
Two or more themes with a score of 4 None less than score of 3	4
Three or more themes with a score of 3 or more None less than score of 2	3
Three or more themes with a score of 2 or more	2
Any other combination	1

# Context

## The locality

- 21 Telford and Wrekin Borough lies in the east of Shropshire, on the edge of the West Midlands. It contains the new town of Telford, so designated in 1968, whose estates reach up to and in some cases encompass a number of smaller traditional towns such as Dawley and Madeley. The Borough also contains the market towns of Wellington and Newport and a UNESCO World Heritage site at Ironbridge, birthplace of the industrial revolution. About two thirds of the Borough is classified as rural, and there are large swathes of green open space in the new town. The design of the new town, with enclosed estates radiating from a largely empty centre, means that the Borough does not have the full range of facilities that are usually at the heart of a major urban centre.
- 22 The population of Telford and Wrekin has grown by 16 per cent since 1991, to 164,600 people. Designated in 2007 as one of the Government's new Growth points, and to meet the demands of the Regional Spatial Strategy, the population is forecast to grow to around 200,000 by 2026, with a 40 per cent increase in the existing housing stock, making it one of the 20 fastest growing boroughs in England. In 2001, 5.2 per cent of the population was from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, up from 3.5 per cent in 1991. The largest minority communities are Indian and Pakistani, though in recent years there has been an influx to the borough of migrant workers from Eastern Europe, mainly Poland. The Borough has historically had a young population, with 21 per cent aged fifteen or less in 2006, against 19 per cent nationally, and just 13 per cent over 65, against 16 per cent nationally. But the older age population is expected to grow significantly by 2026, even faster than the national trend.
- 23 Amid considerable prosperity in the Borough there is also a substantial minority living in poverty and experiencing social exclusion. Twenty two per cent of the population is in the top twenty per cent most deprived nationally, making the borough the 113th most deprived in England, out of 354. Much of this deprivation is concentrated in South Telford new town estates of the 'Radburn' design such as Woodside, Brookside and Sutton Hill, which were built in the 1960s and 1970s combining poor design quality, physical isolation, over-reliance on cars and ageing infrastructure. The housing market in Woodside in particular almost suffered collapse in recent years, with house prices significantly below the national average. Crime levels overall fell by 28.3 per cent between 2003/04 and 2006/07.

- 24 Deprivation is reflected in the health of local people. Life expectancy averages are just below the national averages for both men and women with ill-health and premature death more pronounced in the borough's more deprived communities, but the gap has closed recently. The same is true of the mortality rate. The major causes of death are cancers and heart, circulatory and respiratory diseases. However, alcohol abuse rates, including binge drinking are well above national rates and a significant cause of ill-health and premature death. The rate of teenage pregnancy is higher than the national average.
- 25 Educational attainment is improving. Children receive a good start in education and sound progress is maintained through primary education. Progress in secondary education is not as good. At key stage 3, standards are in line with the national average, but the improvement trend is starting to fall below national averages. GCSE results continue to improve and are in line with the national picture. There have been significant improvements in the skills base of the working age population, with the gap between the local and national averages in NVQ3+ attainment closing quickly.
- 26 The local economy has undergone a number of changes since the new town was created in 1968. An initial period of rapid economic growth was followed by over a decade of decline, with unemployment rates that reached over 20 per cent in the early 1990s. Since then, the previous reliance on traditional, low value added manufacturing has gradually begun to change, though manufacturing, mainly semi-skilled and unskilled, still accounts for around 22 per cent of local employment. The proximity of the West Midlands, with its markets, skills and transportation links across the country and internationally is now being exploited as an opportunity to further reshape the local economic base, for example through the Wolverhampton Telford Technology Corridor. Transportation links westwards are heavily dependant upon the M54, and there is a clearly identified need for improved and expanded road and rail links. Unemployment has now fallen to below the national average because of the recent growth in higher technology industries, with 25,000 more people in employment locally than in 1991. Tourism and conferencing facilities have expanded in the past ten years, contributing significantly to the local economy and pushing workplace earnings in the Borough above the regional level in 2007. Resident earnings have however remained just below regional and national averages.

## The Council

- 27 Telford and Wrekin Council was created on 1 April 1998. The Council has 54 councillors. Labour was in power since the inception of Wrekin District Council in 1974 until the elections in May 2007, when the Conservatives took control for the first time. The current composition of the Council is 27 Conservative, 18 Labour, 3 Liberal Democrat, 3 Independent and 3 Telford and Wrekin People's Association councillors.

- 28 The Council operates the Leader and Cabinet model of executive arrangements. Portfolios held by Cabinet Members are for adult and consumer care, regeneration, resources, community services, children and young people, and environment. Since the May 2007 election, Cabinet members are supported by councillors acting as Cabinet Assistants.
- 29 There are four Scrutiny Commissions covering Children and Young People, Environment and Regeneration, Health and Care, and Community and Resources. Their work is coordinated by the Scrutiny Management Board which also oversees the work of the Scrutiny Value for Money (VFM) Group. Scrutiny Commission chairs are shared out among the political groups.
- 30 The Council has a staffing of 4,536 Full Time Equivalent (FTEs). The net revenue budget for 2008/09 is £118.061 million, and the planned capital programme is £40.669 million. Band D Council tax is below average for Single Tier authorities at £1,351.64 a year.
- 31 The Council is a key partner in the Telford and Wrekin Partnership, the long established local strategic partnership (LSP). The Leader chairs this, while the Chief Executive chairs the Agenda Group, which acts as an unofficial executive to the partnership. The partnership board sets the overall strategic direction for Telford and Wrekin and oversees seven thematic partnerships that focus on key community strategy themes. The community plan, originally agreed in 2002, was reviewed and renewed in 2006, and has been assessed to meet the requirements of the Sustainable Communities Act 2007.

## What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

### Ambition

- 32 The Council is performing strongly in this area. The Council and its partners have developed a vision to completely transform the Borough and its prospects, and thereby make a significant difference to the quality of life for all residents. The vision and ambitions are based on extensive consultation and analysis and a thorough understanding of risks and opportunities, within the Borough, the County and the West Midlands sub-region. Service provision is responsive to local needs and concerns, and delivery is supported by good community leadership, robust decision-making and excellent partnership working.
- 33 Ambitions are clear and extremely challenging. They have been developed in innovative and flexible ways with partners in the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), the Telford and Wrekin Partnership. 'Vision 2026 – Transforming Telford and Wrekin: From New Town to Modern City' sets out a truly ambitious blueprint for transforming the Borough. This is underpinned in the medium term by the Community Strategy, which runs from 2006/11, and which was based on thorough consultation across the community. This in turn was informed by the first Local Area Agreement (LAA) in 2005, which made innovative use of single pot funding to create a twin track approach to regeneration of the Borough. The first track, 'Transforming the Community', established a ten year programme to renew the physical and social infrastructure of the Borough. The second, 'Narrowing the Gap' created the first of a series of rolling three year programmes focused on improved, more responsive service delivery at a local level. This created a shared strategic framework for social and physical regeneration of the borough.
- 34 This strong community leadership extends beyond authority boundaries. The Council has maintained good relationships with the rest of the County while building ever closer links with authorities across the West Midlands. Astute use of the Borough's status as the only sub-regional Growth Point has led to active and influential membership of the City Region forum, to the securing of Black Country and Telford Market Renewal Area status and to the designation of the Wolverhampton/Telford Technology Corridor along the path of the M54. All this has brought immediate returns to the Borough, in terms of regional influence, external funding, housing growth and higher skilled jobs.
- 35 Shared ambitions are underpinned by a robust corporate framework. The Community Strategy is the cornerstone of the Council Plan, which set out seven priorities, six external and one organisational, for future delivery. Corporate ownership of this Plan is strong. As a result staff and councillors know what the Council and its partners aim to achieve, and how they will do it.

- 36 Shared ambitions are based on a clear understanding of need within the Borough. The shared knowledge base, such as the comprehensive 'Foundation' analysis developed with partners in the health sector, goes beyond demographics to anticipate the multiple challenges confronting a sixties New Town whose infrastructure is no longer fit for purpose. This needs analysis was behind the formation of Transforming Telford Ltd, the company that was established in 2007 to pursue the ten year plan for the physical and social infrastructure regeneration of Telford. The Locality Management approach to the regeneration work already underway in South Telford, which requires a detailed understanding of the challenges that are faced in the Borough's wards, demonstrates the clear link between understanding of need, ambition and delivery.
- 37 The new Administration is giving a clearer focus to community leadership based upon the achievements of its predecessor. While maintaining the momentum behind the plans to transform Telford, they have broadened the scope of the transformation agenda, prioritised more explicitly rural issues, and given renewed impetus to locality management inside and outside South Telford. Residents in all areas therefore feel more connected to the transformation agenda.
- 38 The Council engages extremely well with its stakeholders. The LSP is a genuine partnership with a real appetite for delivering on their shared goals. Relations with the private sector have been enhanced significantly by the establishment of Transforming Telford Ltd, and with the migration of the Council's economic development and tourism services to this new, commercially-oriented entity. This model of economic development service migration has now been picked up and used in other, larger conurbations. Community engagement mechanisms are effective. Consultation is extensive, and increasingly so, with the introduction of priority plans giving stakeholders access to the ground floor of policy development. The pilot for locality management in South Telford is another good example of taking engagement to a local level. Engagement with minority communities has become more purposeful since the establishment of the local Race, Equality and Diversity partnership (TREDP) in 2005, with representatives of the six main minority communities now sitting on the Board and feeding into the work of the partnership. The significant improvement in rates of satisfaction with the Council in South Telford demonstrates that the community is convinced that the Council is now listening to them and acting upon their concerns.

## 16 Corporate Assessment | What the Council, together with its partners trying to achieve?

- 39 The Council has a good record of taking and sticking to, tough decisions. A good recent example is the decision to consolidate local secondary schools from 20 to 10 through the Primary Planning of Places Strategy. Any local concerns at this potentially contentious change issue have been successfully defused by a sustained effort to reassure local parents that the changes will deliver early and significant educational improvements. Another example is the decision to intervene when the local football club, Telford United, went bankrupt. Aware of the risks and responsibilities of involvement in such problems that have deterred other Councils across the country, the Council nevertheless decided to lead a coalition of local partners in re-establishing the club as AFC Telford United and to redevelop the club facilities as a learning facility, the Telford Sports, Learning and Enterprise Community (TSLEC). Both examples reveal a Council willing to take and then justify tough decisions, in pursuit of improved outcomes for the people of the Borough.
- 40 The Council has successfully communicated its vision and aspirations to councillors, staff, partners and the media. There is clarity about, and enthusiasm for, the tasks ahead. Change in both Chief Executive and political control has given rise to a softer and more responsive leadership style which gives partners and staff more space to make their own impact. The result is a greater sense of empowerment across the Council and its partnerships.

## Prioritisation

- 41 The Council is performing strongly in this area. Shared ambitions for the area are underpinned by clear and robust priorities which take full account of national and regional policy frameworks and which are fully integrated into the Council's financial and performance frameworks. The strategies for delivery are closely aligned with partners and the targets for improvement, though in some areas extremely challenging, are generally realistic. The links from ambition through to delivery on the ground are clear at every stage in the process. The views, and needs, of all residents, including groups at risk of disadvantage, are now being routinely fed into policy development, as well as action planning. The Council remains focused on what is important and has taken decisions accordingly.
- 42 The Council listens closely to the community and acts upon their concerns. Recent investment decisions bring this out. Core messages from recent resident surveys have been translated into the development of priorities and their delivery. For example an additional £100,000 has been put into the revenue budgets in 2008/09 to improve community safety and public order; a new shared strategy to combat alcohol abuse has been developed with the PCT; an additional £500,000 investment has been made in improved street lighting to make the streets safer at night; significant improvements have been made to the main north south road, the A442, to reduce the high numbers of accidents; and there has been significant investment towards the social and physical regeneration of the borough. As a result resident satisfaction with Council services rose to 68 per cent in the last Citizen's Panel survey.

- 43 The six priorities of the Council and its LSP partners flow directly from the 2026 Vision Statement, the LAA and the community strategy. These are; transforming Telford and Wrekin; giving children and young people the best possible start in their lives; maintaining a high quality, attractive and a sustainable environment; creating a safe, strong and cohesive community; promoting healthy communities and improving the quality of life of vulnerable and older people; and strengthening the local economy and the skills of local people. The Council has added a seventh internal priority; to be an effective and customer-focused council that delivers value for money for the community. These seven priorities run through all aspects of community and corporate planning. The two themes that constantly arise from the six priorities – the need for significant investment in future infrastructure and facilities, while meeting the current needs of the Borough through quality service provision – combine to create a strong basis for a targeted cross-cutting partnership programme.
- 44 The Council has good procedures in place to ensure that all sections of the community, including minorities, other groups at risk of disadvantage and people living in rural communities, get access to the design, delivery and evaluation of service provision. The Council has worked with the local voluntary sector to build more capacity locally, given that the centre of gravity for most of these groups prior to the formation of the Borough was in Shrewsbury. Though still continuing to lack capacity in many areas, the local voluntary community plays an increasingly important role in helping shape policy and service delivery. The introduction of Priority Plans at the end of 2007 was explicitly designed to capture local input, including from the voluntary sector, into policymaking on the seven priorities. The Priority Plans are at the ground floor of policymaking, the crucially important first stage in the process of translating ambitions into achievement. Interaction with the Telford and Wrekin Senior Citizen's Forum, one of the key voluntary groups with an active membership of 1,370, is a good example of how this new approach works in practice. Previously, the Forum's interaction with the Council was largely focused on the delivery of priorities. As a result of the introduction of priority plans, the Forum, and other groups like them, are able to feed into the formation of policy as well.
- 45 The Council policy framework is robust and responsive to changes in local need. There are good links between statutory and other plans. The new LAA, which will run from the end of 2008, is based on thirty areas from the new National Indicator (NI) set and key indicators will be based on extensive local consultation as well the prioritisation process undertaken by the local Community panel. The shared Community Strategy priorities are central to the three year Council Plan, the corporate business plan, the three year priority plans, portfolio management and business plans, as well as personal development plans. The priorities are central to the medium term financial strategy (MTFS) and the performance management framework. These frameworks are responsive to local changes; the latest MTFS was amended to take account of the need to invest further in certain priorities, such as community safety. As a result employees at all levels of the Council relate what they do and what they spend to the overall priorities of the Council and its partners.

## 18 Corporate Assessment | What the Council, together with its partners trying to achieve?

- 46 The Council has effective arrangements for target setting and review. These have been instrumental in continuous improvement in the last five years, both in terms of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) but also in the quality of life for residents more generally. The vast majority of the Council's targets are specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic and time-bound (SMART). The isolated examples that are not, for example in some of the residual aspects of economic development strategy that did not migrate across to Transforming Telford Ltd, are now being reviewed and revised under the expert guidance of the portfolio holder for regeneration.
- 47 The Council is clear on what is a priority and what is not. At the strategic level, this is clear from the successful implementation of alternative models of service provision, from housing management via transfer to the Wrekin Housing Trust, to the hosting contract for environmental services. The Council's Service and Financial Planning Group, working closely with the Corporate Director's Board, use feedback on local need to come up with menus of prioritisation options for political decision. As a result the Council has in the past couple of years decided not to invest in a range of minor local transport issues, such as unadopted roads and a proposed maxi taxi scheme. All of this has enabled the Council to maximise efficiencies, through actively seeking co-location of previous stand alone facilities, and to redirect resources into higher priority areas.
- 48 Action planning is robust and effective. The template for portfolio business plans was reviewed and updated in 2007 and the latest version provides an even sharper focus as to roles, responsibilities, resources and timescales. The fit with the contributions expected from partner organisations is much closer, as is clear from the increasing effectiveness of performance monitoring and management both within the LSP, and at locality level in South Telford.
- 49 The Council and its partners effectively sustain their focus, even when challenged by central government. The prime example of this is the innovative approach they took to the first LAA in 2005. The line of least resistance would have been to put an emphasis upon performance indicators measuring short term delivery gains. The transformational approach adopted by the Council, backed by the LSP, was much more difficult to negotiate with central government, entailing a much bigger investment of capacity, and a higher risk to the Council's credibility. But the twin track approach was based on a clear and persuasive analysis of the needs of the Borough in terms of social and physical regeneration, and for more responsive services. The eventual endorsement of this assessment by central government justified the focused, evidence based approach by the Council and its partners.

## What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

### Capacity

- 50** The Council is performing well in this area. Good political and managerial leadership ensures effective management and sound governance. Councillor development is effective, but does not match the innovative staff development programmes. The workforce is contented and highly motivated and increasingly reflects the diversity of the local population in terms of gender and disability but not ethnic background. Financial management is sound, financial capacity fully supports ambitions and the commitment to achieving value for money is strong. Risk management is embedded throughout the organisation, with rigorous, low cost programmes. The pace of ICT improvement has been slow, and so too has been the introduction of comprehensive and effective customer access arrangements. Procurement delivers good value for money but does not fully support wider objectives.
- 51** The Council's operational culture is strong, providing a sound basis for transparent, relevant and timely decision making. Relationships are characterised by mutual respect. Decision making processes facilitate opposition councillors' contributions to debate, challenge and policy development. For example opposition councillors attend cabinet meetings, with specific briefings in advance. All this ensures that there is a 'One Council' approach to all of the key challenges confronting the Borough.
- 52** Scrutiny makes a consistent contribution to policy development but less so on challenge. The chairs of the four Scrutiny Commissions are shared out among the political groups. Recent influential reviews include the 2007 joint commission report on hospital re-configuration, which laid the groundwork for subsequent countywide work on the Darzi Review. The 2006 care leavers service review, and the 2007 report on Community Support Officers (CSOs), which led to CSO re-tasking. Challenge on finance is strong from the VFM Scrutiny Group, but is weaker on performance management. This blunts the wider impact of Scrutiny.
- 53** Risk Management arrangements are strong. Effective arrangements embed risk and business continuity planning throughout all corporate processes. Strategy implementation is overseen by a corporate group and a lead councillor who reports to the Audit Committee, who together with the Cabinet and Standards Committee, receive regular updates. There is a risk management page on the intranet. Training is continuous, with over 200 workshops conducted in 2007/08. Risk practice is shared externally; for example the joint work with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) on business continuity. The Council won the LGC Finance Award for Risk in 2006.

**20 Corporate Assessment | What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?**

- 54** The Council's partnership arrangements work very well and are kept under review. Partnerships with the voluntary sector are informed by the shared statements on values in the 2005 Compact. Joint commissioning with the PCT with a shared Director of Public Health exemplifies shared arrangements to increase capacity. The LSP is subjected to an annual review by its Agenda Group, the unofficial steering committee made up of the key members of the partnership chaired by the Council Chief Executive, with each LSP theme group offering analysis of gaps and weaknesses and capacity issues. A Joint Efficiencies Group has been set up within the LSP in 2008 to share capacity and learning and reduce costs. Consequently the LSP partners have a very clear understanding of their future capacity needs.
- 55** Standards of governance are strong. Ethics and probity training is delivered at least annually and attendance is high. The standards committee meets regularly and is properly constituted with an independent chair, three independent councillors and separate parish council representation. The committee has oversight of policy and training on standards issues and receives an annual report on Standards Board referrals, which are few, with no local investigations. The Code of Corporate Governance and Constitution meet national standards, as do the separate codes for members and officers. Governance training has been shared with partners; the senior management development programme, which includes partner organisations, has a master class on ethics. Standards and probity are a key to induction training, and the subject of regular reminders throughout the organisation. These arrangements ensure that the Council's governance principles give a clear lead on fairness, inclusivity and accountability.
- 56** The commitment to achieving and improving value for money (VFM) is strong, and was rated as good by the external auditor in early 2008. Sound structures based on benchmarking of costs and performance are in place, with regular reporting upwards. An internal model provides a high level comparison of the performance of all upper tier councils contextualised for local circumstances. Councillors play an important role through the VFM Scrutiny Group which has consistently focused on high spending services, such as looked after children. Robust efficiency arrangements, including the Invest to Save Business Transformation Project, also contribute. All Gershon targets have been met, those for 2007/08 were exceeded by almost half a million pounds and the Council is on course to meet its three-year target of £8.796 million. As a result of all this Council Tax in 2007/08 remained the lowest in the County and among the lowest across the West Midlands.

- 57 Human Resource (HR) strategies are sound and improving, but arrangements for councillor development lag behind those for officers, and the workforce is not fully representative of the local population. The People Strategy is underpinned by both a Corporate Learning and Development Strategy and a Workforce Development Plan. Most programmes are delivered at the Council's own dedicated facility, saving money and standardising quality. The culture of learning and development is deeply embedded among officers, with measures to ensure that impact is maximised. The Elected Member Development Strategy is still being implemented, however. Corporate re-accreditation in Investors In People (IIP) was achieved in 2007. Workforce planning is beginning to dovetail with that of key partners. Satisfaction of the highly motivated workforce climbed again in the 2007 staff survey, with 67 per cent proud to work for the Council and 83 per cent seeing the Council as a good employer. The percentage of staff with disabilities rose to second quartile performance in 2007/08 but the percentage from BME communities fell to fourth quartile. HR has thus had a generally positive impact on the development of staff and partners, but with room for improvement on councillor development, and on BME staff recruitment.
- 58 The Council has robust project management arrangements. European Regional Development Fund projects have been subjected to close EU Scrutiny and judged as 'excellent'. PRINCE2 methodology is standard, with over 100 officers trained in its use, thereby reducing previous reliance on external project support. Each major project has its own Project Board. EU projects are also overseen by a Programme Board, and this model is in the process of being extended to all projects. There are clear procedures for lesson learning; a detailed report on the lessons for Council from the Hadley Learning Community PFI project was prepared as part of the process of gearing up for BSF project management. As a result the Council is well prepared to meet the challenges of future major projects.
- 59 The procurement strategy is well managed and cost effective but does not deliver significantly on wider objectives. The strategy is in line with EU and national legislation and is overseen by a Procurement Steering Group, chaired by the Corporate Director for Resources and supported by a central team. Strategic partnering, such as the jointly owned consortium West Mercia Supplies (WMS) delivers significant returns each year; on the gas contract alone this amounted to £400,000 over two years. Work is underway to develop procurement strategies for sustainability, and equality and diversity, and e-tendering is being rolled out. But as yet, the Council effort is still largely about quality and savings, and still some way off from making and demonstrating a wider impact.
- 60 The Council performance on customer access issues has improved slowly, and is only fair. A new Customer Service Strategy was launched in 2007 following consultation. The customer services team has been significantly reinforced. A one stop shop telephone contact service is being set up, and Freephones established at 20 customer access points, with a new enquiry point aimed at the local BME community. Investment of over £1 million in new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system has been agreed. As yet, the measures that have already been put in place do not fully compensate for the lack of a corporate and comprehensive approach to customer access.

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- 61 The Council's financial strategy is robust, with sufficient capacity to deliver priorities. The Council's record on financial management is strong. Capital spends are reported monthly to pick up slippages early. Resources are planned against need, with close integration between the MTFs and the Council's seven priorities. The Council's recent record of attracting significant external finance is good; recent examples include the £15 million from Advantage West Midlands (AWM) towards Transforming Telford LTD and £6.5 million from the EU for gorge stabilisation. The invest to save Business Transformation programme is expected to produce significant returns in the next three years, allowing for progressive reductions in reliance on balances. There are thus no financial constraints on improvement.
- 62 ICT improvements have come through slowly. The framework is in place to deliver, with a Transformation and Technology strategy and programme board jointly chaired by the Director of Community Services and the Director of Resources, portfolio commissioning groups and individual project boards. But despite the recent introduction of Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) phones and the growing impact of Business Transformation team ICT projects, such as e-tendering, the overall pace of implementation of improvement has been slow.

## Performance management

- 63 The Council is performing well in this area. Service performance has improved for several years and the Council has delivered against its priorities. Underperformance is tackled systematically. The internal performance management processes, and those of the partnerships lead to positive change. The complaints system has been recently upgraded. The Council culture is one of improvement and learning. Challenge, particularly from councillors, does not however, have a clear impact. And there is no council-wide understanding of how performance information should be broken down, and then put back together, as a means of better understanding, and thus targeting, under-performance.
- 64 The Council's performance management framework and processes are comprehensive and geared to improvement. Service, financial and risk performance information is brought together on a regular basis to give a clear picture of how the Council is performing. Performance health check reports based on target, quartile position and trend are produced every four months, to support Cabinet level strategic review of performance, and these are integrated with budgetary data. The Cabinet select priority indicators at the beginning of each financial year and each of these has a tailored action plan which is monitored and managed on a bi-monthly basis. Below that, portfolio management teams review performance on an ongoing basis, with formal analysis at least monthly, while individual performance is formally assessed annually, with one to ones in the intervening period. The system ensures that there are clear and accountable processes to identify and resolve under-performance.

- 65** There are rigorous arrangements for monitoring and review of performance information, including in partnership. The systematic monitoring processes that have been in place for some time were further improved in 2007, with the acquisition of a new system, which captures more information in a more accessible way than its predecessor. A new partnership performance management officers' group has been set up to take ownership of the partnership performance process and to report on performance to the LSP Agenda Group. The partnership review mechanisms for the Community Strategy were drawn up in conjunction with the Commission and Government office West Midlands (GOWM) and the arrangements in key thematic groups such as 'Safer, Stronger Communities' are particularly well embedded and strong. Partners thus have a clear picture of partnership delivery, and the means to improve it.
- 66** Mechanisms for keeping the focus on priority issues are strong. The monitoring and management systems look at underperformance, key priorities and partnership performance. The annual State of the Borough Conference brings all three together in an open discussion forum, basing itself on an 'improvement scorecard' which assesses performance against a set of twenty six key national indicators across the Council's seven priorities. Performance management therefore gives a clear picture of how the Council and its partners are delivering on their ambitions.
- 67** Councillors are closely involved in performance management, but their challenge has no clear impact. The Scrutiny Commissions discuss past performance progress and future targets each spring as a key element in the corporate performance planning cycle. The performance health check reports go to Cabinet and the VFM Scrutiny Group three times a year. Performance data informs the Scrutiny Commission debate on their forward programme. Performance in general across the Council dipped below that of the previous years in 2006/07. The new administration have now taken steps to address this. The Leader, who has specific responsibility in this area, has recently appointed a Councillor to act as the Member Performance Champion to drive this agenda forward.
- 68** The performance culture across the Council, and across partnerships, is strong. Performance management is clearly a central part of the day job, and the links between all the Council plans, including those in partnerships, are in evidence throughout the systems of monitoring and managing performance. The Council is continually looking to improve its performance management systems and is open to external scrutiny and advice, as is clear from the work on partnership arrangements, public debate of the performance data in the State of the Borough Conference and the regular sharing of best practice with their Family Benchmarking Group. Staff incentive schemes capture this performance culture, with keenly contested annual awards for most improved service and best performing portfolio. As a result continuous improvement has been maintained for more than five years.

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- 69** Target setting is very good in most areas, but only fair in economic development and customer care and access. The sustained performance improvement record of the past few years is testament to the challenging but realistic nature of most targets. A lot of trend, capacity and benchmarking data goes into the setting of targets and most of them are SMART. Most of them also reveal a clear understanding of the underlying drivers of performance. But this approach in one or two areas, such as economic development and customer care and access, fall below the generally high standard. In both of those services, insufficient thought has been given to identifying the sub-components of effective delivery and performance improvement, leading to indicators that appear robust, but which do not give managers enough disaggregated and qualitative information to effectively monitor and manage performance.
- 70** The Council processes for learning from past mistakes have improved and are now good. The system for dealing with customer complaints has been reviewed and improved, resulting in a twenty percent increase in resident satisfaction with complaint handling since 2005/06. It now uses regular reviews of resident feedback to inform service standards and prioritise improvement. For example, the 2005 Citizen Survey revealed low levels of satisfaction with environmental services across the Borough, and relatively low satisfaction with the Council generally in South Telford. As a result, the Council developed a new set of environmental service standards in the form of 'service promises' on the back of reorganisation of the service to better meet resident need. The Council also brought forward the implementation of the pilot locality management programme for South Telford. As a result of all this resident satisfaction with environmental services has increased, with much improved feedback on Council performance from areas of previously low satisfaction, such as South Telford.

## What has been achieved?

- 71 The Council performs well in this area. The Council and its partners are delivering improved quality of life for the people of Telford and Wrekin, with strong performance on community safety. Achievements reflect a sustained focus on priorities for the local area that link well to regional and national priorities. Challenging ambitions and clear priorities combine with effective planning and performance management to produce sustainable achievements.
- 72 The Council and its partners are delivering improvements. Physical, economic and social regeneration are transforming the borough. Crime and anti-social behaviour are reducing. Older people are being enabled to live more independently. People in the borough are living longer, healthier lives. Outcomes for children and young people are good.
- 73 Intensive engagement and effective consultation mean that achievements are in the areas that matter most to local people. The most recent resident survey conducted from November 2007 to February 2008 using MORI random sampling techniques but on a bigger scale, put the overall level of public satisfaction with the Council at 55 per cent, up from 50 per cent in the 2006 MORI survey. Satisfaction is high for recycling, and waste collection and disposal. The proportion of 2007/08 returns from BME residents reflected their share in the overall population, at around 5 per cent, and ran at 64 per cent overall satisfaction. Resident satisfaction with the Council's handling of complaints, has improved markedly across the entire community, up from 28 per cent in 2006 to 48 per cent in 2007/08.
- 74 There has been significant improvement in terms of regeneration, jobs and the skill base but progress on the growth agenda has been slow. There are more jobs, more skilled employment, especially in high technology enterprises, and the skills gap with the rest of the country, previously wide, has almost closed. The Council has not met its targets for housing growth, or for affordable housing. But new estates are now being built with high quality design and sound environmental principles, and old estates are being renovated, beginning in South Telford. The improvement in key environmental indicators, particularly recycling, is strong and the Council is developing its role as a local exemplar on energy efficiency. The Council's transport strategy has successfully reversed the long term decline in use of public transport.
- 75 A strong multi-agency approach has significantly reduced crime and anti-social behaviour. Crime levels overall have fallen significantly since 2003/04 and are now well within target as well as below their family group average. Engagement with minority communities is building cohesion, as is work with partners on hate crime. People feel increasingly safe in the borough.

- 76 The health of local people is improving, owing much to effective strategic partnership working, but some challenges remain. Rates of cancer and coronary heart disease have reduced, and life expectancy has increased and all are now near or around the average for England as a whole. However, rates of teenage pregnancy and alcohol abuse remain high. The Council has achieved much in leading a nationally acclaimed local partnership combining an innovative package of healthy lifestyles with learning in an area of multiple deprivation.
- 77 A clear strategic focus on encouraging and maintaining independence is achieving outcomes for frail and vulnerable elderly people, and the people who care for them. There is a wide range of initiatives across service areas responding to the needs of older people, with significant increases in facility usage.
- 78 Outcomes for children are good and generally improving. Educational achievements are in line with similar authorities. Looked after children live in stable placements and a high number receive timely health assessments. Young people have good opportunities to contribute their views and these influence changes in service delivery.

## **Sustainable communities and transport**

- 79 The Council is promoting and supporting the local economy, bringing in jobs and raising skill levels. It is effectively addressing environmental concerns, through increased recycling, improving public transport to reduce reliance on cars, acting as an exemplar on sustainability, stabilising the Ironbridge Gorge and using the railfreight project to reduce commercial dependence on lorries and deliver new cycle paths. But progress on growth has been slow and insufficient. Targets for new housing, including affordable, are likely to be missed. However the Council is helping to deliver high quality new housing projects and renovating some of the most deprived new town estates. The effect of all this has been to increase local prosperity while delivering some of the much needed enhancements to the local environment.
- 80 The Council is implementing ambitious plans to mitigate the effects of local economic structural weakness. The Transforming Telford initiative has brought in significant funding and assets from English Partnerships and Advantage West Midlands. The Wolverhampton and Telford Technology Corridor, a partnership of public, private enterprise and academic bodies has already delivered projects worth in excess of £30 million since 2005, with significant new investment in key local higher technologies, such as polymers, IT and aerospace industries. The local skills base has been improved, with a narrowing gap to national averages on NVQ3+. More than twenty five thousand jobs have been added locally since the 1990s, with unemployment having gone from over 20 per cent to around the national average. Most of these new jobs have been in the high technology sector, with 130 foreign owned firms providing the majority of this growth, and the Council has worked assiduously to attract and then anchor these new industries. As a result the local economy is becoming more robust.

- 81 The Council is not meeting its 2011 housing targets, either on new stock or affordability. Some of this slow progress can be attributed to local market conditions and low land values. Stringent Council conditions on design and environmental quality of new builds, to avoid the mistakes of the original New Town design, have also played their part. Though targets are being missed, the Council approach has meant that such developments that are being delivered are soundly based following extensive community engagement through the planning process. The first phases of three new estates comprising around 10,000 new homes at Lightmoor, Lawley, and Ketley, the latter the only Millennium Community project in the Midlands, are all close to completion, with the proportion of affordable houses around 20 per cent and with high standards of environmental sustainability. The Council has also been required to tackle and clear some very poor quality ex-New Town housing, which has reduced the net number of new homes. English Partnership land release policies, which are strict in terms of environmental sustainability, have also contributed to delay. The overall effect of these factors results in the Council only meeting around fifty per cent of either target even before the national credit crunch began to bite.
- 82 The Council has successfully addressed wider housing needs in more deprived communities, and among the more vulnerable groups. Prevention has halved the numbers of homeless households to 274 in 2006/07, making the borough a Regional Champion on homelessness prevention. Multiple problems in Woodside, the most deprived estate in South Telford, are being solved by the demolition of unfit housing, the construction of new Community facilities and measures to address the lack of local resident parking and safe play areas. All this delivers more choice and better quality housing for more deprived and vulnerable residents.
- 83 The Council has successfully addressed many of the local transport challenges inherent in the design of the new town, with Beacon status for Better Access and Mobility, and for Better Local Public Transport. Five new quality bus routes across the town, reversing the long term decline in local public transport have led to a 20 per cent increase in bus usage, and a 21 per cent increase in user satisfaction, to 70 per cent in 2007. The Council runs a rural bus network, ruraline, using its own fleet of vehicles and the number of rural homes with access to a frequent bus service has risen from 21 per cent to 36 per cent. The Wheels 2 Work scheme run in conjunction with Job Centre Plus has complemented this by assisting individuals in deprived neighbourhoods to access training and employment, with over 450 people assisted since the scheme began in 2003. The majority of local schools now have a travel plan. The Donnington railfreight project, a partnership with the Ministry of Defence, AWM, English Partnerships and the private sector, has added to the well used 92 paths cycle network in the Borough. The improvement work on the A442 has had the intended consequence of saving lives.

- 84 The Council is successfully addressing local environmental issues. The Council's combined recycling rate has doubled since 2003/04, and is now among the best in the country. The Council has implemented a number of measures to reduce its own carbon emissions, for example by use of bio-mass boilers and automated power saving systems and is on course to reduce its own carbon emissions by at least 10 per cent by 2010/11. The new cycle paths linking residential areas to workplaces are very well used. The Council has also taken the lead in addressing the potentially catastrophic risk of landslip at the Ironbridge Gorge, the only UNESCO World Heritage Site in the region. This birthplace of the industrial revolution, helps attract over 1.5 million visitors to the Borough annually, thereby supporting more than 3,000 local service jobs. On its own initiative, the Council has successfully brought in over £10 million pounds from the ERDF and AWM to help mitigate the risk of landslip, an effort that is now being considered by Central Government. As a result the local environment is being protected, as well as enhanced.

## Safer and stronger communities

- 85 The Council, with its partners, is successfully reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and having a positive impact on fear of crime. Performance against all categories of crime is improving and the Council is the national leader in performance improvement on crime reduction. The fear of crime has improved in the past few years, though slipping a little last year. There are sound strategies in place to combat substance abuse, including alcohol, but the scale of local problems remains considerable. Targeted initiatives, including through locality management, are building stronger communities.
- 86 Strategic partnership is strong. Sharing of intelligence and demographic analysis is routine. Performance management is effective. The new Partnership Plan has been recently developed in line with statutory requirements. The Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Joint Task Group deploys multi-agency teams to identified hotspots. An extensive programme of street lighting improvement and repair has been implemented, at a cost of £945,000, with a further £1.16m allocated for the next three years. In South Telford the Council has been a key partner in the Police and Communities Together (PACT) initiatives to raise the profile and effectiveness of policing and through the Woodside Regeneration Project, involving local people in activities that address their priorities. As a result there has been a 28.3 per cent reduction in crime for the period 2003/04 to 2006/07, with reductions in burglary of 62 per cent, vehicle crimes by 36 per cent and violent crime by 17 per cent. In the same period there has been a 32 per cent fall in criminal damage, a 51 per cent reduction in ASB and a 50 per cent reduction in environmental crime complaints. As a result overall crime is now below the national and family group average.

- 87 The Council contributes actively to programmes to combat substance abuse but the full results of these programmes are yet to be seen. There is strong intelligence led multi-agency collaboration to deliver the National Drug Strategy. There is a joint Alcohol Abuse Strategy with the PCT. This has resulted in some improvements and police enforcement targets have been met. Since 2004/05, the number of drug misusers aged 15 to 44 in treatment has risen by 44 per cent, with very high retention rates. The numbers of admissions to Accident and Emergency from alcohol abuse has fallen in the same period. Alcohol related offending has increased as a proportion of overall crime, and drugs related offences have not fallen.
- 88 The Council's road safety record is strong. The number of people killed and seriously injured on the roads fell by 33 per cent in 2006/07 with a 21 per cent reduction for children. Safe routes to school have been put in place and the vast majority of schools have an approved travel plan. The innovative measures to improve the safety of the main North/South road, the A442, won a national award for 'Reducing All Casualties' in June 2007.
- 89 Emergency planning arrangements are robust and have been tested. The Emergency Plan has been recently reviewed and updated to take account of risks identified in the Local Resilience Forum's risk register. There is plan –Operation tangent – specifically designed to deal with major landslip in the Ironbridge Gorge. In 2007 a tactical group covering the Borough and County was established to provide a fast response to emergencies; this was successfully tested by the flash flooding across the Borough in 2007, with rapid deployment of council workers, accommodation and welfare support.
- 90 The Council's community cohesion arrangements are well embedded and effective, but performance on the duty to promote race equality is slipping. It has achieved level 3 equalities standard. It works closely with statutory and voluntary organisations with the local race and diversity partnership (TREDP) to the fore. There is leadership responsibility for community cohesion at both councillor and officer level and the Council has supported local events and campaigns to improve community cohesion, for example the myth busting website. There is a rapid response to race hate crime. Innovative and culturally sensitive help has been provided to Asian women subjected to domestic violence. But in spite of all this good work on cohesion, performance on the duty to promote racial equality slipped to below average in 2006/07, largely because the workforce remains unrepresentative of the local population.

## Healthier communities

- 91 The Council and its partners have made a good contribution to recent improvements in local health. This has been delivered in close partnerships which link closely to national priorities. There is a strong focus on reducing health inequalities and improving health in priority groups by reducing barriers to health care, creating healthy environments and changing behaviour. Although there have been some recent improvements, some health inequalities, such as teenage pregnancies, pose a continuing challenge to the Council and its partners.

- 92 Clear leadership based on close partnership with the PCT, centred on the joint appointment of the Director of Public Health has helped deliver real improvements in local health. Life expectancy for men and women has improved at a rate around twice the regional average and the gap with national averages has been all but closed. A similarly positive outcome is evident with circulatory diseases and cancers. Problems with alcohol abuse remain, but are now being actively addressed by means of the recent joint strategy. The high level of teenage pregnancy is the major outstanding health inequality.
- 93 The health partnership is based on a clear understanding of local health needs. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, known locally as the Foundation, is the cornerstone of the ongoing work on joint commissioning. The Council and its partners demonstrate a good understanding of the impact of issues such as low educational attainment, social exclusion and community safety. In response a wide range of well-targeted, innovative, evidence based initiatives, such as 'Putting People First in Telford and Wrekin' have been developed which are delivering social care and health improvements for the wider population as well as for the borough's most vulnerable and deprived communities.
- 94 One of the Council flagship partnership projects, the Telford Sports Learning and Enterprise Community has already had a significant impact on health lifestyles of some of the more deprived neighbourhoods locally. Working closely with Telford College of Arts and Technology (TCAT), Hadley Learning Community, AFC Telford United and Wrekin College, TSLEC is based in Wellington around four major sites and eight sports, with a budget of over £15 million for 2008/11. The project, now backed by most sporting governing bodies, is to address the needs of three priority wards which are home to the majority of the Borough's BME community, through sport, learning and enterprise activity. Examples of successful TSLEC initiatives include the Football Inclusion Programme aimed at vulnerable children and Playing for Success, an out of hours study support project linked to sports participation. All projects have had a positive impact on participants and on the local community more generally.
- 95 The Council has championed the needs of carers locally, with considerable success. The Council Carers' Strategy, based on extensive consultation, a Carers Contact Centre and feedback from local carers, provides a range of support measures, including grants to BME carers and £250,000 to over one thousand of the estimated 15,000 carers across the community. This support is widely respected locally, for the contribution it has already made.

- 96 The Council's other partnership programmes deliver successful programmes in the community, which led to the Council being awarded Beacon Status for Leisure and Culture for Hard to Reach Groups in 2006. The Healthy Active Lives exercise programme is targeted at older people, and staff who work with them, from a range of backgrounds across the borough. Work with Shropshire Partners in Care is improving nutrition in care settings. The Sport and Recreation Strategy comprises a number of initiatives to narrow health inequalities, improve overall health and address groups at risk of exclusion or disadvantage, and has led to significantly increased usage of local leisure facilities across all sectors of the community. Examples include the 'Let's Get Physical' programme, the Health Action Plan for BME Communities, and programmes for GP referrals. Usage and satisfaction in all these activities is increasing, including among BME communities. A survey conducted in 2006/07 showed that 21 per cent of local adults participate in at least thirty minutes of moderate intensity sport or active recreation at least three times a week, which is above the regional average, and at about the national average. They have contributed to a narrowing of the health gap locally.
- 97 With a clear understanding of the impact of alcohol misuse in the community, the Council has worked closely with the LSP to develop a joint strategy for tackling this, with implementation beginning in 2008. Alcohol-related hospital admissions remain high but have recently fallen slightly in response to joint measures taken by the Council with its partners.

## Older people

- 98 The Council and its partners have made good progress in improving the quality of life for older people, with an increased number being helped to live independently, with healthier lifestyles. A sustained strategic focus with the PCT, underpinned by an extensive package and backed up by clear political leadership and close partnership with a wide range of statutory and voluntary groups, has been the key to success.
- 99 The Council has a clear understanding of changing demographics and is using this analysis to plan future provision. The Community Strategy, the Council Plan and Council priorities are all predicated on the significant demographic shift now underway, with projected local increases in the proportion of people over 65 from 12.4 per cent to 15.5 per cent by 2016, with further increases by 2026. Specific Council strategies, such as that for Older Adults, use analyses of the changing profile of older people living in the borough to address the quality of life needs for older people, and put programmes in place that are addressing these. As a result the Council is putting in place infrastructure to deal with future as well as current needs.

- 100** The Council has made good progress in promoting independence and improving wellbeing. Consultation with older people through the Senior Citizen's Forum has led to a reconfiguring of services within the Older Adults Strategy 2006/09 to help achieve this and the PCT Operation Plan for 2008/09 will carry this on to the next level. The Council's Home Improvement Agency won a Community Care Award in 2006 for the success of its work to help older people make their homes safer, with more than five hundred jobs undertaken in 2006/07. The joint equipment store record on adaptations to support people with physical and sensory disabilities to live at home is among the best performing in the country. The work on slips, trips and falls has reduced the numbers of accidents at home among the elderly. Direct payments to older people, to increase their choice in service provision, have more than doubled since 2004/05, albeit from a fairly low base. The partnership work with the DWP has led to an increase in benefits take up in excess of £1.7 million, which is above target. As a result the number of people aged 65 or over being helped to live at home has increased from 89.5 people per thousand in 2003/04 to 99.8 in 2006/07.
- 101** The Council and its partners are delivering a wider range of services to older people. The local need for additional extra care facilities is being met by the construction of new facilities. The Telford Rapid Access Service for Elderly (TRASE) is a joint Council/PCT initiative providing diagnostic and therapeutic services to prevent hospital admission. Joint programmes for preventing delayed transfer from hospital, based on a rapid response service, have one of the best records and reputations in the country. The creation of a new Social Inclusion Team in 2006/07 is expanding education and employment opportunities for older people, as well as those with a disability. The Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Age Concern has extended the range of advice available through Advice Line, as well as increasing the number of pub clubs and lunch clubs in day centres. An Intergenerational Project Officer has been appointed jointly with the PCT, and has run a number of successful projects. Council programmes have led to usage of leisure facilities by older people almost doubling since 2005/06, though some of that increase may be due to improved data collection procedures.
- 102** The Council is working to help older people at risk of deprivation. The Council runs joint programmes with the PCT on fuel poverty. It has also hosted the sub-regional energy advice centre for a number of years, but with its transfer to Sandwell in the autumn, the Council is looking to fill the gap locally.

- 103** Age is formally being mainstreamed into the equalities agenda in 2008/09, with many more programmes aimed specifically at minority groups, but coverage is incomplete, especially for older people with mental health problems. The number of programmes that specifically address the needs of older people in the BME community is growing, using data from a number of sources, including from the dedicated neighbourhood contact officer from Age Concern. The take up of the BME community of Supporting People's services has been monitored and managed upwards. The needs of the BME community were incorporated into the design of the new extra care facility in Woodside, including the provision of a prayer room. There is a drug awareness programme being run jointly with the local mosque. Joint needs assessment for the admittedly small gypsy and traveller community is being done with neighbouring counties. But programmes to assist the BME community need to be more co-ordinated, with an overarching strategy to bring them together. The same can be said of older people with mental health problems. The Mental Health Strategy was reviewed and enhanced in anticipation of a new sheltered hospital which never materialised, and most of the elements of the new strategy are now only partially delivered, or on hold.
- 104** Consultation with older people is good. The main point of contact is the Senior Citizen's Forum, whose active membership of over 1,370 brings in a relatively high proportion of the total population of older people. The Council works closely with them on a range of issues, from the strategic, such as the design of the Health and Wellbeing strategy, through to outstanding issues of concern, such as the recent shift in national guidance on bus passes which does not allow use until 0930. Though generally satisfied with the increasing level of engagement, the Forum is looking to the Council to give it more time to consider policy documents of importance to it, and more feedback on the background to eventual decisions.

## Children and young people

- 105** Outcomes for children and young people in Telford & Wrekin are generally good. Most health outcomes are in line with similar councils and all referrals to specialist mental health services are seen within expected timescales. Educational achievements are in line with similar councils. Looked after children live in stable placements and a high number receive timely health assessments. Young people have good opportunities to contribute their views and these influence changes in service delivery. A high proportion of careleavers and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is engaged in education, employment or training, although the overall proportion for young people in Telford & Wrekin has fallen and is now slightly below the national average.

- 106** Service management in Telford & Wrekin is good. Strong ambitions for children and young people are shared at the highest levels. The Children and Young People's Plan and its priorities link well with other strategic plans and resources are well directed to these priorities. Partnership working is very strong. Integrated workforce planning and strategic engagement with smaller voluntary organisations are underdeveloped although plans are in place to address them. Performance monitoring arrangements are in place but good quality management information is not gathered or used systematically to provide an overview of the performance of individual services and secure continuous service improvements across the partnerships as a whole.
- 107** The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Partners and schools work effectively to promote healthy lifestyles. The number of schools achieving healthy schools standards is increasing, although partners recognise that more action is needed to achieve the target. Parents and carers of younger children with disabilities receive very good support. There is a comprehensive child and adolescent mental health service which offers timely intervention, although they have identified the need to extend services for those with autistic spectrum disorder. Good support is provided to teenage mothers-to-be and young parents but the rate of teenage conception remains persistently high.
- 108** Children and young people appear safe and arrangements to ensure this are adequate. A significant reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured in road accidents has resulted in a very low figure. Partners collaborate very well to deliver outstanding family support services, delivered by five well established local multi-agency cluster teams. Good action is taken to promote awareness of and tackle domestic abuse. Sound action is taken to ensure children at risk of harm are protected and social care arrangements to respond to referrals are adequate. Agencies work together effectively and communicate well to produce good outcomes for most young people. However not all cases are allocated promptly to a named social worker and this, combined with the variable quality of care plans leads to some inconsistent practice.
- 109** The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and to achieve well is good. Children receive a good start in education and sound progress is maintained throughout primary school. Progress in secondary education is not as good. At key stage 3, standards are in line with the national average, but the improvement trend is starting to fall below national averages. GCSE results continue to improve and are in line with the national picture, but there has been less success in securing good grades in English and mathematics. GCSE results for looked after young people are in line with the national average, but the number missing school for more than 25 days has risen sharply. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities usually do well at school, however, a special school has recently been placed in special measures. The rate of permanent exclusion reduced significantly between 2005/06 and 2006/07 from 45 to 17. Robust arrangements ensure good managed transfers and prompt educational provision for excluded pupils.

- 110** The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good. The council is committed to providing good opportunities for young people to contribute their views and responds positively to the results of consultation. All looked after children's reviews are held on time and almost all young people participate in them. Looked after young people are well consulted on services and have influenced changes. A high number of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities contribute to their transition reviews, and are well supported by the local multi-agency cluster teams to access leisure activities. The youth offending service is well managed and services are linked appropriately with partners' strategies and priorities.
- 111** The impact of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good. Strong partnerships promote awareness of career opportunities and raise young people's aspirations. A well planned and delivered 14-19 strategy helps to maintain good quality education and training. The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training has risen and is slightly above the national average. Very good support has resulted in all care leavers living in suitable accommodation and a high level of engagement post-16 education and training. Good arrangements prepare young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well for adult life and the improving rate of those engaged in education, employment or training is above national figures. The capacity of the council to improve is good.

## Appendix 1 – Framework for Corporate Assessment

- 1 This corporate assessment was carried out under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, under which the Audit Commission has power to inspect local authorities' arrangements for securing continuous improvement. The results of the corporate assessment contribute to the determination of the overall CPA category for an authority, which the Audit Commission is required to assess and report on under section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 2 The Council's self assessment provided a key resource in focusing the assessment activity which included consideration of:
  - key documentation, including the Council's improvement plan;
  - updated performance indicators and performance data; and
  - interviews and meetings attended.
- 3 The assessment for Telford and Wrekin Borough Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 12 May to 23 May 2008.
- 4 This report has been discussed with the Council, which has been given the opportunity to examine the Audit Commission's assessment. This report will be used as the basis for improvement planning by the Council.